



*Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Wellington*

2 September 2005

The United States Embassy in Wellington would like to thank the large number of New Zealanders who have contacted the Embassy offering support and assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

We deeply appreciate the condolences and offers of help, both from individual New Zealanders and from the New Zealand Government.

The Embassy has been working closely with agencies in the United States to establish the best way in which assistance can be provided to the people affected by this unprecedented event.

The priority at this time is to meet the immediate life saving and life sustaining needs of victims. US federal and state governments are coordinating a massive mobilization of resources for urban search and rescue efforts, housing, food and medical care.

While we appreciate the many generous offers we have received, volunteers should not report directly to the affected areas unless directed to do so by an approved U.S. voluntary agency. The unfortunate reality is that well-meaning self-dispatched volunteers can put themselves and others in harm's way and hamper rescue efforts.

At present, the best, most efficient and most direct way that New Zealanders can make a difference is by donating cash to voluntary agencies working with the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency assisting victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The Embassy recommends making such donations through the New Zealand Salvation Army's phone line 0800 530 000, through the American Red Cross website www.redcross.org or to one of the other charities listed on the Federal Emergency Management Agency website. www.fema.gov. (Both these web sites also contain information on the current conditions in the region.)

Additionally we would like to advise concerned family members of those residing or traveling in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina to continue to try to reach their family members by phone, email or other available means. Reports from the region indicate that some phone lines are working but are experiencing heavy call volume, so family members should be encouraged to keep trying.

Families who continue to have concerns about New Zealand citizens known to be in the affected region, may also contact the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on 04 439 8000.